



FALL BRIDES

Hiring the Perfect Vendors



The options can be overwhelming. From DJs and flower shops, to caterers and photographers, it takes a lot to coordinate the long list of services to ensure your wedding goes off without a hitch.

And finding the right fits will require more than simply choosing a few names out of a phone book.

Consider the vendor selection process as a business decision. After all, you are paying these companies a lot of money for their services. Their performance must be great not only on the day of your wedding, but also in the months and weeks leading up to it.

Follow these steps to find the perfect vendors for all of your needs so you can focus on what's really important about your special day – you.

DUE DILIGENCE

As with any business decision, due diligence is key to making a smart investment. And that's exactly what your vendor is. So, before handing over a deposit check to your wedding DJ or venue, do a little research on the front end.

Interview several wedding vendors in all key categories – food, drinks, photos, music, venue and even planning if you are working with a consultant. Have key questions ready for your interviews and take notes throughout the process on the pros and cons of each service. Then work with your future spouse to go through the notes and choose the perfect fit for your needs.

BE REALISTIC

Vendors realize this is your wedding and are usually willing to work with whatever special request you may have. But be realistic – and nice. Just because you are paying a vendor doesn't mean they deserve to be treated like an underappreciated employee.

We've all seen the shows on TV depicting some brides-to-be as highly stressed, extremely moody and downright mean. Don't be that bride. Communicate often with your vendors to make sure they are on track with your goals and treat them as a business partner working side-by-side with you to knock your wedding out of the park.

Dealing with Cold Feet

Often thought of as an emotion that “comes with the territory” when deciding to get married, cold feet can actually be a very difficult issue for brides to work through.

Some people may believe they are jumping into marriage too early in the relationship, while others may have a hard time handling the stress of planning a wedding. No matter where the anxiety is coming from, it is important to take an honest look at the issue and deal with it accordingly – even if that means calling off the wedding.

IDENTIFY YOUR ISSUE

Are you dreading the end of your single life because of the potential of missing out on parties, social events or time with friends? Do you associate being married with being old? Are attributes about your future spouse that drive you crazy coming to light?

Once you identify what is freezing your feet, you can work on de-thawing them with the help of your friends and family. While some issues may be able to be worked out between you and your spouse-to-be, hopefully you feel comfortable to open up to those around you for advice.

TALK TO MARRIED COUPLES

One of the best ways to get advice about cold feet is to talk with a couple you know that has been happily married for a long time. They will be able to guide you through the actual wedding experience and give you practical advice for handling your big day.



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If you are struggling with the marriage aspect of your wedding, ask your married friends how they rate their lives before and after tying the knot. Are they happier? Regretful? Gather as much advice and real experiences as you can to help paint yourself a visual expectation of the marriage process.

SERIOUS REASONS TO BAIL

While some cold feet can be attributed to stress and nerves, some are actually caused by serious factors that should not be ignored. If you or someone you know is experiencing

verbal or physical abuse leading up to the wedding, then it is time to consider pulling the plug on the engagement.

Other issues that can crop up now and get worse later: Cheating, emotional disconnection, fights about money, lying, religious differences and wildly varying outlooks on raising children.

Rustic Weddings

The phrase “rustic wedding” is buzzing in the wedding industry, as brides combine a modern and old-style mix into their special days. But what exactly does the term signify?

Rustic means vintage and can span all aspects of your wedding – dress, tuxedo, venue, food, photography and more.

DRESS AND DÉCOR

When searching for a rustic-style dress, consider color, fit and how it will flow with the attire of the wedding party. A classic off-white dress with lace and other minor touches can be a home run if you’re going for that timeless, romantically rustic look.

You can also weave the details of your wedding dress into your reception. Tie in the color of your gown with the tablecloths or include a strand of lace on the table markers. Going with a bouquet mix of subtly colored tulips? Display vases with tulips as centerpieces on some of your tables.

VENUE

Sometimes the quirkiest venues make for the best rustic weddings. The more nature, the better, since trees and rolling hills offer the perfect backdrop for a throwback event. Search your local area for unique outdoor venues that specialize in weddings.



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But be prepared to shell out a pretty penny for these inclusive setups, which generally throw only about 10 to 15 weddings per year. Seating may also be an issue for some intimate outdoor venues, which can mean a no-go if

you’re planning on inviting hundreds of guests.

DETAILS

A strategically designed suite of save-the-dates, invitations and place cards. Strings of

glowing lanterns strewn from the border of your reception pavilion. Sepia-toned photographs of your wedding party that seemingly place your wedding back in the 1950s.

All of these items have one thing in common – they

scream rustic. Pulling these details into one event can help beautifully convey your vintage theme. When planning your wedding, consider every detail and ask yourself, “How can I make this rustic?”

A Smooth Rehearsal

The last thing your bridal party wants to do is spend four hours practicing their roles the night before the wedding. That goes for you, too.

Everyone involved in your wedding has likely participated in or witnessed one before. And unless you're re-inventing the wedding experience, your best rehearsal strategy will be to keep it simple and straightforward.

KEEP YOUR COMPOSURE

Fair or not, rehearsal participants will be looking to the bride for clues of nerves. They will also depend on the bride for direction in their roles. There are a couple of ways you can avoid this extra stress as your big day is mere hours away.

- Delegate: Maybe the anxiety has gotten to you throughout the planning process and you can't imagine taking on one more responsibility. That's OK. Someone will. Choose a friend or family member not in your bridal party and defer the rehearsal planning to that person. They can ensure everyone gets there on time and ready to practice their responsibilities.

- Take it on calmly: No one knows the details of your wedding like you do. You have been behind every decision, purchase and plan. So you may decide to take control of your rehearsal process, as well. If you do, have a plan in place to practice your run-through a couple of times, then head out for a relaxing meal with your party.

DINNER

And speaking of the rehearsal dinner, it is important to determine early in the wedding planning process who will foot the bill. Traditionally, the groom's parents pick up the tab for the party's food and drinks, but you will want to check if this will be the case for your dinner. If not, you could be left holding the bag for an expensive night.

THANK YOU

While enjoying your final dinner as an unwed individual, don't forget to thank all of the people around you who have gotten you to this point. The rehearsal dinner is a great forum for giving a thank-you toast or handing out bridal party gifts. You may also enlist the help of family members or friends in delivering a toast or two.



The Shoes

Often overlooked and hardly seen, shoes are the underrated piece of a stunning bridal ensemble. They can be the most important aspect of bridal comfort from the time you walk ceremoniously down the aisle all the way through the last dance of the night.

Choosing your dream gown is difficult enough, so don't sweat the small stuff on your shoes. You can be both functional and fashionable when selecting a shoe that matches your dress.

ALWAYS MEASURE

You may be attracted to a special online deal that you come across, but be sure to have an accurate measurement before making your final purchase. Measuring is also important for your bridal shop consultant.

Once you have your shoes, wear them for your dress fitting. This way, your dressmaker will know the exact height of your shoes so she can adjust your dress accordingly.

COMFORT FIRST

You will likely be on your feet for most of your wedding day, so opt for comfort first. What good are your shoes if your feet are blistered at the end of the night? Choosing a high spiky heel may sound like a good idea for giving you a bit of extra height, but won't seem so enticing after you catch a heel in your dress.

MATCH YOUR THEME

Are you going with a country wedding that will be most easily navigated on a pair of wedges? How about a big

city event that you may decide to brave high heels? The nature of your venue and event deserve consideration during your shoe-shopping experience.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Don't wait until your special day to give your shoes a test run.

Wear them around the house for a couple hours per week leading up to the wedding. This will help them break in and get your feet used to them, as well.



Bridal Checklist

If you're planning a wedding, then you already know: It's hard work. There are multiple balls in the air as you try to juggle your way to the finish line. As you do so, it is important to stay calm and remain focused on the end result. The checklist below can help you do just that.

- Announce your engagement to the world and choose a wedding date.
 - Figure out a budget and decide who is paying for what.
 - Choose the vital aspects of your wedding
 - Officiant.
 - Site (ceremony and reception).
 - Wedding party.
 - Color scheme.
 - Interview all vendors, including:
 - Wedding planner.
 - Caterer.
 - Cake.
 - Music.
 - Drinks.
 - Photographer /videographer.
 - Florist.
 - Complete guest list.
 - Create and send out invitations.
 - Choose the dress and tuxedo.
 - Order wedding outfits.
 - Shop for wedding bands.
 - Buy special gift for groom/bride.
 - Make honeymoon reservations.
 - Arrange and plan rehearsal dinner.
 - Final dress fitting and makeup run-through.
 - Fill out paperwork for change of name, if applicable.
 - Host bridesmaid's party.
 - Attend bachelorette/ bachelor party
 - Finalize all details
 - Enjoy your day



Emergency Bridal Gown Care

You're having a great time dancing the night away with your friends, family and newly declared spouse – and then it happens. You rip your dress or spill something on it, leaving you panicked and frantically looking for a solution to repair the gown of your dreams.

And with the average dress costing brides more than \$1,000, according to the Association of Bridal Consultants, this can be a downright expensive disaster.

But just like with any clothing malfunction, a dress mishap can be resolved. Deciding how to fix your issue comes down to understanding your gown's fabric and being prepared for emergency situations.

Your bridal shop consultant will likely advise you on the fiber content of your dress and what actions you should take when dealing with a spill or rip. Your gown will also come equipped with a care label that can help walk you through an effective cleanup.

SPILLS: LEAVE THEM ALONE

Unless the spill is making you uncomfortable or embarrassed, the Association of Wedding Gown Specialists urges you to leave it alone, because more damage can actually be done during a hasty repair than by a clear-headed approach in the days following your wedding. You may also elect to seek professional cleaning help for serious stains.

If you do decide to treat the spot yourself, club soda can be an effective tool, as can simple cool water. The Association of Wedding Gown Specialists warns against using water on silk and rayon velvets, because they are water-sensitive and may incur permanent water spots.

SAFETY PINS

Spills aren't the only emergencies that can happen during a wedding. Rips, broken zippers and torn straps also can lead to major issues. Throughout your special day, your gown is likely to be stepped on or caught on something, leaving a fabric rip in the process. Safety pins to the rescue.

Many full-service bridal shops will place several safety pins into the underside of your gown especially for these accidents. If not, fasten a few yourself or have a fresh supply of sticky tape or even staples. Always be careful not to damage your gown further during the fix, especially if you have hopes of one day passing your gown down to one of your children.

